296. It's all in the game

By Ron Klinger

Dealer North : East-West vulnerable

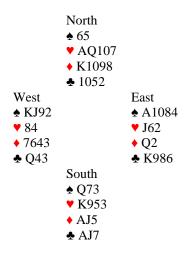
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT (15-17)
Pass	3 ♣ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	3 ♦ ⁽²⁾
Pass	3 ♠ ⁽³⁾	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	
(1) Do you have a 5-card major?			
(2) No.			
(3) I have four hearts, not four spades. Pick the contract.			

What would you lead as West from:

★ KJ92
♥ 84
♦ 7643
★ Q43

Today's deal comes from the 2017 Spingold (USA Open Knockout Teams), Round of 16, Session 3.

Board 33: Dealer North : East-West vulnerable



After the auction above, West led the \diamond 7: ten – two – five. Declarer continued with the \diamond 8: queen – ace – six (suit-preference for spades). Declarer cashed \diamond J, crossed to the \forall A and played the \diamond K. When the hearts behaved, he had 4 diamonds, 4 hearts and the \clubsuit A, 9 tricks, +400.

Points to note: 1. North's 3⁺ was forcing to game. North upgraded the 9-count, usually suitable for a game-invitation opposite 15-17 points, because of the three tens.

2. South knew there was a 4-4 heart fit, but chose 3NT because of the 4-3-3-3 pattern. A 4-3-3-3 opposite a 4-3-3-3 usually makes as many tricks in no-trumps and in the 4-4 major fit. When that number is nine, you want to be in 3NT. A 4-3-3-3 opposite a 4-4-3-2 often does better in 3NT than in 4-major.

3. If West had led the \bigstar 2, the defence could take the first four tricks. After a club or a heart exit at trick 5 would mean declarer would have to find the \blacklozenge Q.

4. If North-South end in 4, a diamond lead by West would solve South's problems, just as it did against 3NT. If West leads a trump against 4, South will again need to locate the $\diamond Q$. There is no reason why South should pick the diamond layout.

At the other table, North-South bid Pass : 1NT, $2 \ge 2 \diamond$, 2NT, all pass. West did lead the ≥ 2 and the defence took four spade tricks, followed by ≥ 6 from East, low, $\ge Q$. Declarer made eight tricks for +120, but 7 Imps away.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer East : Both vulnerable

West North East South Pass $2^{(1)}$ (1) 6 hearts, 6-10 points

What would you do as North with:

▲Q1093

- ♥ A
- ♦ K87
- ♣ AK985

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

There are some brains like the Bermuda Triangle. Information goes in, never to be found again.